

## "FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SAGAMORE CONFERENCE ON URBAN HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT"

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You are all familiar with the fact that the expanded highway program with its new emphasis on urban improvements has caused much discussion on the inter-relationship between highway development and community development. We hear about it on the radio, we read about it in the papers and we see it on television.

With these issues in mind, the Joint Committee on Highways of the American Municipal Association and the American Association of State Highway Officials, as well as the Highway Research Board and the University of Syracuse, held a Conference in the Sagamore Center in upper New York State in October 1958. The objective of this Conference was to explore the problems related to highway and urban development as fully and objectively as possible. It brought together 55 highway officials, mayors, public works directors, city planners, traffic engineers, transit officials and business and civic leaders. During the five days in which these 55 people were together in this Conference retreat many principles and objectives were agreed upon. As one of these conferees I would like to try to outline today what I think are some of the outstanding achievements of this conference. As you all know, this has been written up in a document called the Sagamore Conference on Highways and Urban Development and is available from the Joint Committee of AMA and AASHO.

During the opening session I think the Chairman of the Conference, Executive Secretary, A. E. Johnson, of the American Association of State Highway Officials, stated very explicitly the challenge that was before the Conference in these terms:

"In order to properly locate new highways in existing urban areas, we need to know more about the highways' effect on the area and the area's effects on highway design and location requirements. . . .

"In locating a highway in rural areas, most major controls are of a physical nature; whereas in urban areas, the major controls may be complex man-made ones or human problems of a vast living organism that is the modern urban community. We should give though to the other benefits possible from such highway development, which may well outweigh the direct benefits to the highway user.

"The urban highway development authorized by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 makes possible critically needed urban highway construction well ahead of the time it could have been otherwise accomplished. In fact, it came about with such suddenness that some were not prepared for it.

"Both state highway officials and local authorities must nonetheless do the best they can to produce sensible, forward looking plans to coordinate highway and general urban development. If they work together, and go to work promptly, they will generally find that despite the time schedule pressure, they will have time to do a good job."

Mayor Ben West of Nashville, Tennessee, followed Mr. Johnson's comments by emphasizing that:

"Municipal land use as it now exists all too often bears a startling resemblance to crazy quilts. It is a jungle of diversification, partly inherited, mostly created. Lack of comprehensive community and area-wide planning is one of our greatest deficiencies. Formerly highways were built and they determined land use. Now we have an opportunity to determine the most desirable land use for the future growth of cities, and through cooperation, locate highways to advance over-all community objectives.

"The City Administrator must be concerned of course with the entire street system, including transit, trucking and parking, and the relation of new freeways to it. Local streets must not be regarded as ill-begotten children. Moreover, the City Administrator must think of the over-all city—in all phases of its development."

There was strong agreement with Mayor West's point that what we are interested in is a system of streets which function as a whole. For, after all, the majority of all vehicle trips have an origin, a routing and a destination which involve roads and streets of several jurisdictions, yet in the mind of the motorist and the actual trip patterns, the entire highway network of the nation is a single system without distinction or barrier. Therefore, we must recognize that no portion of the highway system in any area can be effectively planned, designed or operated without complete understanding of the system as a whole. In considering who is responsible for designing this system in urban areas it was recognized that the planning task is a joint one requiring intergovernmental cooperation. The basic initiative and leadership, however, should come from the local official. Factors that were considered important at the Sagamore Conference in carrying out this planning task are:

1. Responsibility for preparing a community plan rests with local government, which should be encouraged to take immediate action to develop one if none exists. Where such planning is not undertaken, it behooves the state to take the initiative.
2. Regional planning should be initiated in every metropolitan area. The parent city should assume this responsibility; but if it doesn't, state action should be taken.
3. Local government should establish a competent and continuing planning program aimed at preparing comprehensive plans and keeping them current.

Local officials should consult regularly with the State Highway Department in the preparation of these plans for urban areas.

4. If legislation is lacking to enable proper planning on a local, metropolitan or regional basis, the state and local governments should work jointly to have such legislation enacted.

In considering the responsibility for design and construction of our urban highways, it was recognized that over the years this responsibility has been broadly disposed over governmental jurisdictions. In various states there is a wide variation in responsibilities among governmental units. However, it was recognized that one of the first things that should be understood by the various agencies that are involved, is that they must understand the other person's problems and responsibilities if we are to obtain the necessary cooperation that is essential to develop sound highway designs. Therefore, it must be recognized that:

1. Each State Highway Department has the prime legal responsibility for implementing state highway programs, including the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, and for their completion within the prescribed time.

2. The Federal responsibility, exercised through the Bureau of Public Roads under the Secretary of Commerce, is to insure that the Federal funds allocated to the states are put to proper use. Proposed construction must be fully warranted; locations must be justified; standards must meet minimums set by joint State-Federal action; construction must meet requirements of adopted specifications.

3. Municipalities and counties have primary responsibility in constructing and managing the urban street plant, about 90 per cent of which is generally outside the state sphere of action and ineligible to participate in Federal-aid highway funds.

Recognizing that the legal responsibilities of various agencies varied from state to state, there was a strong feeling at Sagamore that there was plenty latitude in the laws to permit cooperative effort. There were certain steps that both city officials and state officials should take to insure the proper intergovernmental cooperation that is needed. Some of the steps that were considered are as follows:

1. Effective Relationships:

State Leagues of Municipalities, State Associations of County Officials, and State Highway Departments should establish sound working relationships on a state-wide scale. They should also stimulate and encourage the formation and use of cooperative procedures at the local level.

2. Highway Coordinator:

Experience in many parts of the country has demonstrated that local units of government can make a definite contribution to closer state-local cooperation by creating a Coordinator for Highway Programs. The duties of this position involve coordination of the work of all interested officials of the local government—including the City Council, the Mayor and City Manager, the City Engineer and Traffic Engineer, the Planner, and others, as well as liaison between the city and the State Highway Department. Appointment of a Coordinator has proved to be a valuable step whether or not the community has developed an over-all plan.

3. State Action for Improved Cooperation:

The state on its side can improve the lines of intergovernmental cooperation in urban highway programs. Feasible methods include the designation of a top staff man in the State Highway Department to concentrate on urban highway matters; the setting up of a district or regional



office encompassing a major metropolitan area; or perhaps the establishment of an urban staff within the department.

4. Joint Staff:

A joint engineering staff to prepare a master plan of expressways and feeder roads is sometimes the answer. Another approach is to bring city, county, and state officials together in common office space when planning a program, so that teamwork is encouraged and the skills of all specialists are fully utilized.

5. Improved Communications:

Easily-used channels of communications must be maintained between local and state officials. City officials, for example, must be able to inform the proper officials in the State Highway Department promptly about new developments which threaten to preempt potential rights-of-way. Because the city possesses subdivision control, city officials know when property is about to be put into urban use and when some of it is on the verge of being subdivided. This enables the highway official to "firm up" his plans in accordance with this local development. Thus, with city officials accepting responsibility they can discharge, and state highway officials accepting responsibility they can discharge, together an integrated job is accomplished.

6. Cooperation from Outset:

Early cooperation avoids later misunderstandings and friction. City, county and state agencies should work closely together from the very inception of the planning.

In our larger cities where we get into metropolitan area coordination, additional steps should be taken, particularly in light of the absence of any central governmental unit. However, these steps will undoubtedly vary from one locality to another. Some of the types of cooperative effort achieved on a metropolitan basis that were discussed at Sagamore were:

A. Tulsa, Oklahoma:

Anticipating an expansion of the highway program, the Tulsa Metropolitan Planning Commission in 1955 teamed up with the City and County Commission to embark on a study for a future expressway network. Subjects covered included physical features, economic and population growth estimates through 1975 with a distribution of these projections in terms of recommended areas for residential, industrial, commercial, and major public uses.

This led, following passage of the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, to a Cooperative Expressway Planning Program, undertaken under the 1½% planning funds provision of the Act. The work was conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Highways and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. To expedite the program, a Technical Advisory Committee was formed. With a Planning Commission staff member as Chairman, the Committee comprised the City Engineer, the City Traffic Engineer, County Engineer, and representatives of the State Highway Department and the Bureau of Public Roads. As a result of this teamwork, Tulsa, with strong public support and acceptance, has developed a framework for a realistic attack on long-range arterial needs keyed to dynamic growth of the area.

B. San Diego, California:

As one of the pilot cities in the program of the National Committee on Urban Transportation, San Diego organized a Technical Coordinating Committee to supervise essential studies on an area-wide basis. This Committee consists of planners and engineers of six communities in the area and representatives of the County and the California Division of Highways, as well as of the San Diego Transit System, the Traffic Division of the Police

Department, the Urban Renewal Coordinator, the Industrial Coordinator, and the United States Navy. The Bureau of Public Roads also participates.

Through this coordinating team a long-range highway study was prepared, the outgrowth of which was a tentative street, highway and freeway plan for the entire 500 square-mile metropolitan area.

In light of the discussions that were held, there was a strong feeling that the only way to establish sound cooperative programs is to set up all the measures that you take on a continuing basis. Certainly, we cannot afford any longer to develop "one shot" plans. The plans we develop for highways and community development in urban areas must continually be brought up to date in light of changing conditions which are noted from factual observations. In fact, there was a strong feeling that all urban areas should seek more information on the underlying problems related to their transportation plans. They recommended that cities should work cooperatively with State Highway Departments in transportation planning and the use of the Guide and Manuals of the National Committee on Urban Transportation are excellent in helping communities to carry out such programs.

The dynamic changes that are occurring in our urban areas offer many opportunities, if we can effectively plan for them through cooperative effort in the future. The people attending the Sagamore Conference felt strongly that this is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.